

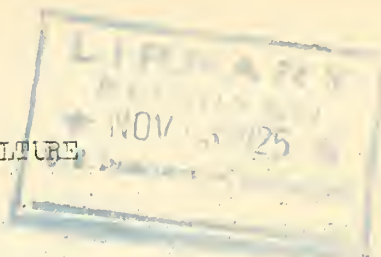
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BUREAU OF BIOLOGICAL SURVEY



THE CARE OF SWANS

The following directions are compiled chiefly from accounts of experienced breeders, which may be consulted in greater detail in the publications listed at the end of this circular.

PERMITS

No wild swans may be captured, confined, bought, sold, or shipped for propagating purposes without permit from the United States Department of Agriculture. Application for such permits should be addressed to the Biological Survey. Many States also require permits to be taken out for the propagation of wild fowl, and in States so doing both State and Federal permits are necessary. Addresses of State officials from whom permits can be obtained and a summary of all State game laws may be had by addressing the Biological Survey.

Although swans are classed as migratory game birds, there is no open season on them anywhere in the United States. One of our two native species, the trumpeter swan, is so rare that no permits are issued for the trapping of any swans in the region, British Columbia, Alberta, and Montana, where small flocks of trumpeters are still known to exist.

STOCK

Breeding stock of several species of swans may be obtained from dealers a list of whom will be furnished upon request. Swans are slow to mate and remain mated permanently. The only satisfactory way to buy them, therefore, is in guaranteed mated pairs. Under normal circumstances never separate the birds of a pair. It is necessary to pinion swans, as the birds are not sure to return home if allowed to fly.

RANGE

Swans are large and aggressive birds and must be given plenty of space. If the available range is not large enough so that pairs can separate when they choose thus preventing constant fighting, an ample pen should be wired off for each pair. The birds can not keep in good condition without access to water and if a body of water is available large enough to maintain plant growth for natural roughage, so much the better.

FEEDING

Swans graze, but not so extensively as do geese. Grass, clover, and especially alfalfa are suitable green foods, and it helps a great deal if a growth of water plants is available to the birds. If not directly accessible gather some of these plants occasionally and feed them. Water weeds are a very necessary element of food for the cygnets or young. In addition to roughage, swans must have grain, and this is usually thrown in the water

for them. Any small grains will serve and occasionally whole corn may be given. Grain given to cygnets should be soaked over night; but oatmeal is preferable for them. In winter, clover and alfalfa hay, chopped roots, bran, oats, and a little whole corn may be fed. Plenty of grit and clean water should always be available. Swans are slow feeders and should be fed apart from ducks, geese, or chickens. If this is not feasible, place their food in a pail on a box and wet it thoroughly.

#### BREEDING

Swans, like wild geese, are allowed entire charge of family affairs. They pair very deliberately but for life. They are particular about nesting sites and are said to take most readily to small islands. If natural conditions do not permit thorough separation of the pairs, fences must be used. Adults not only fight among themselves, but will kill the young of other pairs.

#### WINTERING

Swans can winter in the Northern States in a shelter open to the south and littered with plenty of hay or straw to protect their feet. Where their swimming pool does not freeze over, no winter shelter is required.

#### ARTICLES ON THE CARE OF SWANS

CORSAN, G. H.

Breeding the Swan in America: The Game Breeder, vol. 28, no. 7, pp. 7-14, 7 photos. October 1925.

JOB, H. K.

Propagation of Wild Birds: Doubleday Page & Co., Garden City, Long Island, N. Y.; Chapter XI, pp. 192-193, and supplementary notes pp. 294-296 relate to swans. 1925.

McGREW, T. F.

Swans and How to Manage Them: Country Life in America, vol. 6, no. 4, pp. 331-333, 12 photos. August, 1904.